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Leah

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0 COMMENTS (HTTPS://WWW.PATHEOS.COM/BLOGS/RECLAIMINGTHETRUTH/2023/09/LEAH/#COMMENTS-SECTION)

Leah

Leah was the older sister of **Rachel (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/2023/08/rachel/)**. Leah's life was hard due to poor eyesight and lack of true love. Yet, she persisted and became a matriarch of our faith. Through disability and loneliness, she overcame. Despite Leah's disadvantages, she was a fighter and stood up for herself.

The Older Sister Should Marry First

Leah was the older sister. Therefore, Leah should have been married first according to tradition, but the text tells us **Leah was "weak-eyed." (https://www.biblehub.com/genesis/29-17.htm)** We may take this to mean she was blind or at the least had very poor vision. **Bible Hub commentary (https://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/29-17.htm)** states that she may have had Ophthalmia, which was common to people living in a hot sandy region. **Ophthalmia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ophthalmia)** is an inflammation of the eye which can result in blindness. A disability like that would have been a hindrance to marriage, as a man would not want to take on the responsibility. Thus, Jacob fell in love with her beautiful younger sister, Rachel.

Leah's father agreed to allow Jacob to marry Rachel if Jacob worked for him for 7 years, but when the day came for the wedding Leah snuck into Jacob's tent instead of Rachel. With this deception, she ensured a marriage, children, and a livelihood for herself. While The Torah does not say so, The Midrash suggests Rachel helped with this scheme to ensure her older sister with weak eyes was married first.

Leah Stands Up To Her Sister

Leah becomes pregnant and has children for Jacob, which brings her a sense of pride. Yet, we still see her lament that **her husband does not love her (https://biblehub.com/genesis/29-31.htm)** and instead loves her sister, Rachel. She is envious of her sister and the love Jacob has for her.

Jacob is finally allowed to marry Rachel after another 7 years of labor. This causes much strife between the two sisters because Rachel soon learns she can not get pregnant. She then becomes envious of Leah. One day, one of Leah's sons brings her the mandrakes he had picked. Rachel seeing an opportunity to perhaps cure her bareness asks Leah if she can have some of the mandrakes. Here for the first time, we get a real glimpse of Leah's character and see her stand up for herself. She replies to Rachel saying **"Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too? (https://biblehub.com/genesis/30-15.htm)**" Rachel offers Leah the chance to sleep with their husband that night in exchange for mandrakes. Leah agrees. Soon both sisters are pregnant.

Leah and Rachel Take Revenge

With Rachel able to conceive, the sisters seem to put their differences aside. By the time Jacob decides to leave, the sisters are united in their aggression towards their father, whom they believe squandered their inheritance and sold them. Leah joins her sister in saying **"Do we have any portion or inheritance left in our father's house? 15 Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? Not only has he sold us, but he has certainly squandered what was paid for us. 16 Surely all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has told you." (https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+31%3A14-16&version=NIV)**

As I mentioned in the **Rachel article (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/2023/08/rachel/)**, this may be the most feminist thinking in The Torah. These two strong, beautiful women, are angry because their father sold them and squandered their inheritance, in a world where women rarely inherited and were often thought of as property. These women saw themselves as more than property, and as deserving of an inheritance as any son.

Perseverance

Leah was born with a disability, but Leah was not disabled. She did not let that disability stop her from marrying, having children, becoming a matriarch of our faith, or standing up for herself and her rights. When we remember Leah, I hope that we remember that no matter what our challenges, we can prevail. Leah reminds me that it is not what we were born with but who we are that determines our life's course. Circumstances are what they are, but we choose how we respond to them.

Stay tuned for the continuation of The Women in The Bible series. **Click here (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/)** to subscribe to the newsletter and be alerted when new articles are published. Also, next week, our guest blogger **Joseph Parks, (https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100001268416816)** will return to finish his series on Ancient Egypt. So, you do not want to miss anything.